

LIVING ORTHODOXY



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THE SUFFERING OF THE HOLY MARTYRS SERGIUS AND BACCHUS

Whom the Holy Church Commemorates on the 9th of October

The holy martyrs Sergius and Bacchus, who were Romans by lineage, were high officials and the first among the nobles at the court of the Emperor Maximian. The Emperor loved and respected them greatly for their prudent advice at meetings of his council, for their bravery in battle, and for their devotion to his service. Rare it was that anyone could approach the Emperor with a petition otherwise than through these, his most loyal counsellors; they were in his favor as none other was. However, Sergius and Bacchus sought favor not so much from an earthly ruler, as from the King of Heaven, for they believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, strove to be pleasing to Him in their lives, and served Him with diligence. Yet because they feared the Emperor, they hid their faith in Christ for a long time, for Maximian looked upon Christians with boundless loathing and implacable wrath. But the light of the faith of Christ did not long remain hid within them as under a bushel, and soon it was manifestly disclosed to all.

Certain men, hating them for their exalted position and for the love which the Emperor showed them, and desiring to provoke the hatred and anger of the Emperor against them, reported to him that Sergius and Bacchus were Christians, and that they refused to accord worship to idols. Maximian did not wish to lend credence to the allegation that men who enjoyed such considerable favor with him would not consent to worship his gods with him; he was reluctant to ask them of this or to accuse them, not knowing if the denunciation was reliable. However, he decided to test them in the following manner.

One day, he appointed a festival in honor of his gods, and went in company with all the princes and dignitaries, with soldiers and servants, surrounded by all his imperial grandeur, to the temple of the chief god Jupiter, to offer solemn sacrifice to him there. Meanwhile, he watched carefully to see if Sergius and Bacchus, his beloved nobles, would enter the temple with him. But when the Emperor entered the temple, the servants of Christ remained outside and did not enter the abominable temple with the Emperor; standing a little distance away, they prayed to the true God, asking Him to enlighten the blindness of the eyes of that impious people and to glorify His all-holy name through them.

The Emperor, seeing that Sergius and Bacchus had not entered into the festivities with him, sent a servant to lay hold of them and to bring them by force of main into the temple. When the holy ones were brought into the midst of that God-opposing assembly, Maximian ordered them to worship the idols with him, to offer up sacrifice, and to eat

of the idolatrous offerings. But Sergius and Bacchus refused to obey the Emperor's order. "We have a God Who is in heaven," they said, "a God Who is not false or insensible, as your insensible idols are, but a true and living God Who maintaineth the whole world in His power; Him do we worship!" And they began to denounce the Emperor for his false religion, and that he was rendering the honor due to the one God to blind, deaf and dumb idols.

Then the Emperor, filled with wrath, commanded that they be stripped of all the tokens of their high rank: their military belts, golden pendants and rings, and all their garments; and that, to mock them, they be dressed in women's undergarments, and iron hoops be hung about their necks. And the saints were led about the city in this guise, that in such manner such glorious and distinguished nobles of Rome might be mocked and laughed at by all the people for worshipping the one true God and reviling the false gods of the pagans, or, it would be better to say, the very demons, to whom these servants of God did not wish to bring sacrifice, having already offered themselves as a sacrifice unto Christ.

When the abominable sacrifices were concluded, Maximian returned to his palace and, taking pity on Sergius and Bacchus, since he loved them greatly, he summoned them into his presence and said: "My beloved and faithful friends! Wherefore have ye be-thought yourselves of dishonoring our gods and grieving your emperor, who hath been so merciful and gracious unto you? And why have ye brought such dishonor upon yourselves? Though I love you greatly, I cannot endure mockery of my gods, and I shall be forced to give you over to tortures, even against my will. Therefore I beseech you, my friends, forsake this Son of a carpenter Whom the Jews hung upon a cross with male-factors as a criminal, and be not deceived by the fables and sorceries of the Christians. Turn again to our great gods, and I will show you yet greater honor and yet greater mercy, and ye will enjoy my love and, with me inseparably, will take delight in all the good things of my realm."

But Sergius and Bacchus, desiring not to fall away from the love of God for the sake of the love of an emperor or to be deprived of everlasting good things for the sake of things which pass away, would not obey the Emperor. Filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, they boldly and persuasively began to prove to the Emperor the total impotence of his false gods; they courageously confessed in his presence the might and divinity of Jesus Christ, and advised the Emperor himself to acknowledge this celestial truth. The impious Emperor, whose heart was hard and whose intellect was blinded, would not accept their good counsel and, on the contrary, became inflamed with yet greater anger and wrath. But in his love for them, not wishing to give them over to tortures himself, he sent them

to Antiochus, the Prefect of the East. This man was a cruel persecutor and tormenter of the Christians; he had achieved the rank of prefect through the mediation of Sergius and Bacchus with the Emperor, and afterwards was assigned to the East.

Thus, it was to this prefect that the saints were dispatched. The Emperor thought that they would fear his cruelty, word of which had spread throughout the whole empire, and at the same time be ashamed to find themselves under the authority of one who before had practically been their servant, and thus, out of fear and shame, renounce Christ. But even if this did not so transpire, it would in any event suit the Emperor far more to have them tortured in some place far from him, rather than under his very gaze.

And so they led the holy martyrs from Rome in chains. Having spent an entire day in travel, the soldiers who accompanied them stopped at an inn for a night's rest. There, at midnight, when the soldiers who were guarding them were fast asleep, Sergius and Bacchus stood in prayer and began to entreat from God strength to manfully endure all the sufferings which awaited them. When they were praying, the angel of the Lord appeared to them, bathing them in heavenly light and strengthening them with the following words: "Be of good cheer, O servants of God, and arm yourselves against the devil like good warriors. Ye shall soon be victorious!" After saying these things, the angel vanished.

Sergius and Bacchus, filled with ineffable joy, began to offer up praise unto the Lord Whose good pleasure it was to visit His servants with such an angelic vision.

All throughout their long journey to the East, the holy martyrs spent time in prayer and hymnody, and thus they were armed yet more against the invisible spirits of malice. Passing through many cities and towns, they finally reached the eastern city of Varvalisso, west of the River Euphrates in Mesopotamia, where Antiochus, the Prefect of the East, was then to be found; to him did the soldiers hand over the prisoners, together with an imperial scroll containing the following message: "Maximian, the eternal Emperor, to Antiochus, Prefect of the Eastern Lands, Hail! Our gods do not permit a single man, and particularly the champions and servants of our dominion, to be impious men who do not take part in the sacrifices offered to them. For this reason we have condemned Sergius and Bacchus and, as followers of the impious Christian faith, have accounted them worthy of the death penalty. But, since they are unworthy to receive punishment from the emperor himself, we have sent them unto thee. If they, repenting, obey us and offer sacrifice unto the gods, show them condescension and free them from the appointed torments; furthermore, promise that we also shall be merciful, and that each of them will receive back his former dignity and will merit from us favor greater than before.

But if they will not obey and remain in their former impious faith, then commit them to the tortures they deserve and condemn them to death by beheading. In the hope of long life, be thou in good health!"

On reading the Emperor's command, Antiochus gave the order that Sergius and Bacchus be imprisoned under guard until morning. On the morrow, entering the praetorium, he sat in his tribunal and, having had the holy martyrs brought before him, spoke to them thus: 'My fathers and benefactors, through whose mediation I attained this rank, authors of my present glory: how your position has altered! Now I sit before you as a judge, and ye, prisoners in bonds, stand before me, ye, before whom I formerly stood as a servant. I entreat you, be not the cause of such evil for yourselves; obey the Emperor and offer sacrifice unto the gods, and ye will again receive your former rank and will again be honored with glory. But if ye do not do this, I shall be forced, against my will, to carry out the Emperor's command by having you tortured. Ye yourselves have heard what the Emperor has commanded that I do in his letter. Wherefore, my lords, be merciful to yourselves, and also to me, for I in no way wish to be the cruel tormenter of my benefactors.

The saints answered him, saying: "In vain dost thou wish to lead us astray by thy discourse: for to those who seek heavenly life, honor and dishonor, life and death are matters of indifference. For to us 'to live is Christ, and to die is gain' [Phil 1:21]." And many other things did Sergius and Bacchus say, reviling and denouncing idolatry and the ungodliness of the impious. After this, Antiochus, enraged, commanded that the holy Sergius be incarcerated in prison, and that Bacchus, stripped and stretched out on the ground, be beaten without mercy. They beat the saint all over his body for such a long time that even the underlings who were beating him, having become tired, had to take turns in inflicting the beating on the martyr. As a result of these blows, the flesh of the martyr fell away, as it were, from his bones, and blood flowed from him like water. Amid these tortures, the holy Bacchus surrendered his soul into the hands of the Lord. Antiochus commanded that the body of the athlete of Christ be taken out of the city and cast somewhere far removed, to be food for the wild beasts and birds. But the Lord preserved his bones: several Christians, who had hidden themselves outside the city out of fear of the idolators, left their refuges in caves and ravines at night, took up the body of the saint, and buried it with honor in one of the caves in which they had concealed themselves.

Sergius, having heard tell of the repose of his friend while sitting in prison, was greatly grieved and greatly saddened over having to part with him. "Woe is me, O Bacchus my brother!" he repeated to himself over and over, "Now I can no longer chant with you: 'Behold now, what is so good or joyous as for brethren to dwell together in unity?' [Ps 132:1]. Thou hast left me alone!"

On the following night, while the holy Sergius was thus lamenting, there appeared to him in a dream the holy Bacchus, his countenance as radiant as an angel's, in vesture shining with celestial light. He began to console him, telling him of the reward prepared for them in heaven, and he strengthened him for the feat of martyrdom which lay before him, for which he would receive from the Lord great mercy and boldness. After this vision, Sergius was filled with joy, and in the gladness of his heart he began to hymn the Lord.

Soon the Prefect, moving to another city called Sura, ordered that Sergius be brought along. There, having sat in his tribunal, he began to speak to the saint, saying: 'The impious man Bacchus did not wish to offer sacrifice to the gods and thought it better to die a violent death than to honor them; and so he received an execution which befitted his deeds. But thou, O Sergius, why be deceived by this ungodly teaching; why subject thyself to so great a misfortune? I am ashamed of thy previous benefaction towards me and thy rank. Thou standest before me as one condemned, and I, seated, shall render judgment over thee. Once a man of little consequence, I am now, thanks to thy mediation before the Emperor, exalted with a high rank, and am now higher even than thee; but thou, who asked the Emperor so often for good things for so many people, dost now desire evil for thyself. I beseech thee: heed my advice, and fulfil the Emperor's command: offer sacrifice to the gods, and thou shalt be raised up to thy former rank and be accounted worthy of thy previous glory.'

To this the holy Sergius responded: "Transitory honor and glory are vain, and after a transient dishonor will follow everlasting glory. For me this earthly dishonor is honor; and transient glory I seek not, for I hope to be found worthy by my Savior of true and eternal honor in heavenly glory. Thou remindest me of my former benefactions towards thee, that I mediated with an earthly Emperor on thy behalf and was responsible for thy great rank; but now I tell thee: hearken unto me and, acknowledging the truth, reject thy false gods and worship the God of heaven and the King of the ages with me, and I promise to intercede with Him for thee and acquire yet greater things than I did from Maximian!"

Then Antiochus, convinced that he had not the power to win him away from Christ and to bring him to submit to the Emperor's will, said: "Thou forcest me, O Sergius, to forget all thy benefactions and to commit thee to grievous tortures."

Sergius answered: "Do what thou wishest. I have Christ as my helper, Who once said: 'Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul' [Mt 10:28]. Thou now hast authority over my body to rend it asunder, but over my soul neither thou, nor Satan thy father, hast any authority!"

After this, Antiochus, filled with ire, said: "I see that my long-suffering maketh thee only more audacious!" And he gave the command to place on his feet iron sandals, with long, sharp nails protruding through the soles, which pierced the feet of the saint. And Antiochus commanded that Sergius, wearing such footwear, be driven before his chariot as he travelled to the city of Tetrapirium, from which he intended to depart for Rozapha. Enduring such sufferings, the holy one chanted on the way: "With patience I waited patiently for the Lord, and He was attentive unto me, and He hearkened unto my supplication. And He brought me up out of the pit of misery, and from the mire of clay. And He set my feet upon a rock, and He ordered my steps aright" [Ps 39:2f]. And when they arrived at the city of Tetrapirium, which lay more than thirteen miles from Sura, they brought the martyr to prison. On the way thither he chanted: "Yea, even he who ate of my bread, hath magnified the lifting of heels against me [Ps. 40:9]. They have set a snare for my feet with bonds of cruel torments; but arise, O Lord, to my help, and trip them up, and deliver my soul from the ungodly."

At night in prison, when the martyr was praying, there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, and healed his wounds. The next day Antiochus ordered the holy Sergius taken from prison, thinking that in his pain he would not even be able to stand on his feet. But seeing from a distance that he was walking like a man in complete health, and not even limping, the tyrant said in fear: "Truly this man is a sorcerer, for after such torments how can he walk without limping? It is as if his feet had never suffered affliction!"

After this, Antiochus commanded that the martyr again be shod in the iron sandals and made to walk before him to Rozapha, and from Sura to that city the distance was some seventy stadia [about eight miles]. There, entering the tribunal, Antiochus began to try to persuade the holy Sergius to worship idols; but he was unable to win him away from the confession of Christ, and therefore condemned the martyr to death. When they brought the saint outside the city to the place of execution, he asked of them a little time for prayer. While praying, he heard a voice from heaven summoning him to the mansions of paradise, and, bowing his head with joy beneath the sword, he reposed. His body was buried by Christians on that site.

A little while later, the Christians of the city of Sura arranged secretly to take the body of the saint from Rozapha and transfer it to their own city. When they went to the grave at night, a pillar of fire was seen issuing forth from the grave, the top of which reached to the very heavens. Certain of the soldiers who lived in Rozapha, seeing the pillar of fire which illumined their whole city at midnight, armed themselves and went to that place; and there they beheld the people of Sura who were seized with fear at the sight of that pillar of fire. Soon the manifestation of the wondrous pillar ceased. Then the

citizens of Sura understood that the holy Sergius did not wish to leave the place where he had shed his blood and laid down his life for Christ; and in honor of the martyr they set up a marvellous stone tomb on the site.

With the spread of Christianity, a church was constructed in Rozapha, dedicated to the holy martyr Sergius. Fifteen bishops of the surrounding cities, having gathered together, solemnly transferred the incorrupt and fragrant relics of the holy martyr to the newly-constructed church, and established the 7th of October as the day of his commemoration, it having been the day of his repose. In both places, both in the church where the relics of St. Sergius were and at the site of his martyrdom and original burial, many of the possessed and afflicted received healing of their infirmities.

It is worthy of mention that, every year on the day of the saint's commemoration, the wild beasts, observing as it were some law, left the nearby wilderness and assembled at the place where the holy martyr had first been buried. At such times their wild nature was tamed, and they became as meek as lambs. They did not attack men or domestic animals, but, having walked peacefully about that holy place, returned to their desert. Thus God glorified His favored one, so that not only men, but even the wild beasts were inspired to celebrate his memory.

The memory of the holy martyrs Sergius and Bacchus was so widely honored throughout the East in ancient times that many of the pious undertook to make pilgrimages to their relics. There is evidence from the writings of Theodore of Cyrrhus of an annual celebration of the martyr Sergius in the early 5th century. In that same century Bishop Alexander of Hieropolis had a magnificent church built in honor of these martyrs. Emperor Justinian the Great (527-565) fortified the city of Rozapha, where St. Sergius had suffered and where his relics were enshrined, and even at the beginning of his reign constructed a splendid church dedicated to SS. Sergius and Bacchus near his palace in Constantinople, as a token of his gratitude for being delivered from prison before he became Emperor. Here their precious and incorrupt heads were preserved for a time, where the Russian pilgrims Anthony the Monk (1200) and Stephen of Novgorod (c. 1350) venerated them. When King Chosroes I (532-579) launched an assault upon Rozapha, which by then had been renamed Sergiopolis, the small populace of the city surrendered to him all of their precious objects, except the relics of the holy martyr Sergius, which were enshrined in an oblong reliquary covered with silver. Learning of this, Chosroes laid siege with his entire army to Rozapha, but there appeared on its battlements a vast multitude of warriors armed with shields and prepared to defend it. Chosroes understood that this was a miracle wrought by the martyr and, struck with fear, left the city in peace. St. Gregory of Tours, the famous Frankish chronicler of the 6th century, writes that in his time, in the West,

St. Sergius was greatly venerated for the many miracles and benefactions which were accomplished for them that had recourse to him in faith.

Through the prayers of the holy Sergius, may the Lord quell the anger of our enemies, as once he subdued the savagery of the wild beasts, unto the glory of His Name, forever. Amen.

Translated by Isaac E. Lambertsen from The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, as Set Forth in the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Vol. II (Oct.), pp. 123-132 (Moscow: Synodal Press, 1904).

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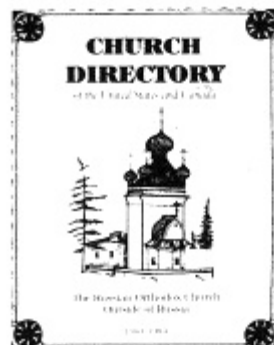
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THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL THE CONFESSOR, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Whose Memory the Holy Church Celebrates on the 6th of November

During the reign of the Emperor Constantius, the son of St. Constantine the Great, Orthodox Christians were subjected to persecution at the hands of the Arian heretics, whose part was taken by the Emperor himself, for he had been drawn into that heresy. Great turmoil and dissension then arose in the Church, since there were few of those great champions of Orthodoxy who were Her support: St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria, the greatest defender of the Orthodox, was driven from his see, and St. Alexander, Patriarch of Constantinople, was at that time dying.

When the holy Alexander was dying, those who surrounded his death bed asked him: "To whom wilt thou leave us, thy spiritual children, O father? Whom wilt thou leave for us as pastor in thy stead? Who can govern the Church of Christ as vigilantly as thou?" He indicated to them two worthy men, namely the presbyter Paul, a native of Thessalonica, and the deacon Macedonius; yet at the same time he added that if they desired to have a pastor skilled in teaching and resplendent in the virtue of his life, they should choose Paul, but if they wished to have as pastor an imposing man, distinguished in his outward nobility, then let them choose Macedonius. Thereafter the ever-memorable Patriarch reposed. At the Council which took place after his passing, during the debate over which of the two, Paul or Macedonius, should be raised to the patriarchal throne, an argument took place between the Orthodox and the Arians, of whom there were very many present. The Orthodox desired Paul, whereas the Arians were more inclined towards Macedonius; however, the Orthodox won out and, in the Church of Holy Peace, St. Paul was elected to the patriarchate; and mounting the patriarchal throne he began to tend with diligence the flock entrusted to him.

During the election and consecration of the holy Paul, the Emperor Constantius was not in the Imperial City, but was resident in Antioch. Consequently, he was not well disposed towards the new Patriarch. Returning from Antioch to Constantinople, the Emperor showed open displeasure with the Patriarch for having ascended the patriarchal throne without taking into account the imperial will. At the Arians' instigation, the Emperor convoked a council which, contrary to the canons, deposed the holy Paul, who was guilty of nothing, pure of heart, and greatly benefited the Church of Christ, for by his wisdom and life he was a true light to the world and shone forth in the Church like the morning star in the midst of clouds. To replace the deposed Paul, the Emperor elevated Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, and then departed again for Antioch. Eusebius, infected with the

heresy of Arianism, began to trouble the Church with his heretical teaching, and strove with all his might to remove from the Symbol of Faith the clause "begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father," for he did not acknowledge that the Son of God is God and is in all things the equal of God the Father. Meanwhile, the deposed Paul journeyed to Rome, where he found the holy Athanasius and many other bishops who had been driven out by Eusebius, and he sojourned with them. But Eusebius, not wishing that Athanasius and Paul escape persecution in Rome, sent to the holy Pope Julius of Rome a letter full of slanders against them. The Pope placed no credence in the letter and advised Athanasius and Paul to return to their ministry. Desiring to show them some assistance, he wrote to the bishops of the East, asking them to receive with love those who were returning and not to hinder them from resuming their former positions.

Thus, the bishops who had been driven away each returned to his own church and sent to those who had driven them out the letters of Pope Julius which they had brought with them from Rome. But the enemies of Orthodoxy, on receiving the epistles, again strove in every way possible to cover the truth with a lie and planned to convoke a council in Antioch; and they endeavored to answer Pope Julius in a special letter. Meanwhile, Eusebius died before he could reach the council. Then the Orthodox inhabitants of the Imperial City joyfully received Paul and enthroned him on the patriarchal cathedra; but the Arians gathered together in another church and elected Macedonius, who had espoused their heresy, to be their bishop. Hence great turmoil ensued in Constantinople, and many suffered and were slain in the clashes which took place between the two sides.

Word of this reached the Emperor Constantius, who was then in Antioch, and he sent to Constantinople a high-ranking military officer named Hermogenes with a force of soldiers, ordering him to drive Paul from the Church of Constantinople. On arriving in the Imperial City, Hermogenes tried to compel the populace to drive the holy Paul, who was guilty of nought, from the city, and thus he caused a tremendous riot in the city, for the people steadfastly refused to carry out the Emperor's will. Hermogenes wished to bring military might to bear on the situation, but an angry mob launched itself at his home and burned it down, and Hermogenes himself was dragged therefrom and slain.

When the Emperor Constantius learned of the slaying of Hermogenes, he immediately left Antioch for Constantinople, cast down Paul and drove him forth, and railed mightily against the inhabitants of the city for accepting Paul against his will and for sedition and the murder of Hermogenes. For all of this, the Emperor deprived the city of half of the alms allocated for them by St. Constantine the Great, and reduced by half the amount of bread distributed annually from the imperial granaries to the poor of the city. Then, having confirmed Macedonius as Patriarch of Constantinople, Constantius returned to

Antioch. The holy Paul again made his way west and, appearing before Pope Julius, related to him, as well as to Constans, Emperor of the West, all that had happened to him. Constans, brother of Constantius, and the Pope, wrote a letter to Constantius, attempting to persuade him to accept Paul, since he was Orthodox of faith, and they entrusted this letter to Paul himself, who left Rome for Constantinople a second time. There the Orthodox met him and received him with great joy. The letters of Emperor Constans and Pope Julius he sent to the Emperor Constantius in Antioch by way of a certain nobleman. But Constantius understood the letters to be a reprimand directed at him, and he refused to accept Paul. On the contrary, the Emperor was even more enraged at him for returning a second time, without his permission, to his episcopacy, and immediately sent an order to Philip, the eparch of the province of Constantinople, to depose and drive away Paul and to elevate Macedonius. Philip, fearing the sedition of the people and that he would come to the same end as Hermogenes, bethought himself how secretly to remove Paul from the episcopal cathedra. With this aim in mind, telling no one of the Emperor's order, he went one day to a special place on the shore of the sea, where taxes were collected. This was known as the Zeuxippus. There Philip said that he had come to collect taxes, and at the same time sent to the holy Paul an invitation, couched in terms of honor, to meet with him for a secret discussion on the subject of a certain social matter. Paul, in his trustfulness, did not hesitate to come. Philip, fearing the huge crowd of people which had accompanied the saint, did not move against him in the sight of the mob, but, taking him by the hand and conversing with him, led him within the palace. There he ordered the outer doors which led to the sea opened, and, leading the holy one through them, he declared to him the will of the Emperor, put him on a ship which had been moored there beforehand, and thus the saint, with every possible precaution, was carried into exile. He was permitted to take up residence in his homeland, the city of Thessalonica, and had permission to visit all the surrounding cities, but was forbidden to enter the eastern provinces, i.e., those of Asia and Africa.

After the exile of the holy Paul, the provincial governor drove triumphantly with Macedonius on a chariot, accompanied by a large military force, to the church. On learning of this, the citizens of Constantinople were greatly incensed, and both Orthodox and Arians straightway hurled themselves at the church, striving to drive one another out and take control of that place. Philip, on arriving at the church, was unable to enter because of the extraordinary concourse of people. Then he and Macedonius descended from the chariot, and the soldiers drove the people back by force; yet because of the press, the foremost ranks of the crowd were unable to retreat. Then the soldiers were enraged and began to use their weapons, cutting a path to the church for Philip and Macedonius. Three thousand, one hundred and fifty people perished at that time, some at the soldiers' swords, some because of the extreme press of the crowd; and all of this took place for the sake

of Macedonius, who assumed the patriarchal throne in accordance with the will of the Emperor and thanks to military might, but contrary to the laws of the Church. To commemorate the alleged peace of the Church which ensued, the Emperor Constantius built a church dedicated to the Wisdom of God and enclosed it and the Church of Holy Peace, which had been erected by St. Constantine the Great, within a common fence.

Having abode for a time in Thessalonica, the holy Paul travelled thence to Corinth, and thence on to Rome. There he again found the holy Athanasius, related all his misadventures to him, and they both reported concerning their lot to the Emperor Constans. The Emperor was greatly angered at his brother and sent him a letter asking him to send three bishops from the East who were to give an account of the deposition of Athanasius and Paul and at the same time bring with them a written exposition of their confession of faith. On receiving this letter, Constantius, who was still in Antioch, grew afraid of his brother's wrath and sent him four bishops: Narcissus of Cylicia, Theodore of Thrace, Marisus of Chalcedon and Mark of Syria. These bishops, appearing in Rome before the Emperor, did not have the courage to enter into a discussion with Athanasius and Paul, concealed the faith (which was in fact heretical) which they had professed in Antioch, and, composing a different exposition, presented it to the Emperor. This exposition was as follows: "We believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator and Fashioner of all, from Whom all things in the heavens and on earth have received existence; and in His only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was begotten of the Father before all ages, God of God, Light of Light, through Whom all things visible and invisible, in heaven and on earth, arose, the true Word and Wisdom and Power, the true Life and Light, Who for our sake in the latter days became man and was born of the holy Virgin, crucified and died, and was buried, and arose from the dead on the third day, and ascended in the heavens, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead and to render unto each according to his deeds, and His Kingdom shall have no end and shall continue for endless ages. We believe in the Holy Spirit, Who is the Comforter and Whom the Lord promised to the apostles and sent to them after His ascent into the heavens, through Whom souls who truly and piously believe in Him are sanctified. And those who say that the Son is of another essence and is not of God the Father, and that there was a time when He did not exist, the holy catholic and apostolic Church does not accept."

Having submitted this exposition of the faith to the Emperor and many other persons, the bishops departed from Rome. In three years' time, the bishops of the East again assembled in council, composed another exposition of faith, and sent it to the bishops of Italy. But the latter, because of the verbosity and prolixity of the new exposition, did not accept it, being wholly satisfied with the confession of faith which the holy fathers

of the Council of Nicaea had composed. Hence there arose between the Churches of the East and the West disagreements and considerable misunderstandings, as a result of which both Emperors summoned the bishops to a council in Sardica to review the confessions of faith and decide once and for all the cases of Athanasius and Paul. More than three hundred bishops from the West travelled to Sardica for the council, but only seventy-six arrived from the East. Those eastern bishops who were infected with Arianism and at the same time feared to enter into controversy with such champions of Orthodoxy as Athanasius and Paul, and therefore desired to leave the council, refused to join in conciliar discussion with the Westerners until they expelled Athanasius and Paul from their midst. Then Protogenes, Bishop of Sredetia [the present-day Sofia, Bulgaria], and the venerable Curdovius and others, said to the bishops of the East: "We have assembled here not only to discuss the consubstantiality of the Son and the Father, but also to resolve the case of Athanasius and Paul."

On hearing this, the bishops of the East left those of the West, departed from Sardica, and, on their return journey, having reached the city of Philippopolis in Macedonia, organized their own separate, and ungodly, council, at which they resolved that the Son should not be confessed to be of one essence with the Father; and they openly committed the dogma of consubstantiality to anathema. And they announced this heretical resolution to their own dioceses by special epistles.

When word of this reached the fathers at the Council of Sardica, first of all they condemned those who had fallen into heresy through an incorrect teaching concerning the Son of God, and then they deposed from the clergy those who accused Athanasius and Paul; they then acknowledged the absolute correctness of the Symbol of Faith composed in Nicaea, and committed to anathema all who in general did not confess that the Son is of one essence with the Father. For his part, the Emperor Constans wrote to his brother Constantius, trying to persuade him to restore to Athanasius and Paul their episcopal sees, and he immediately dispatched Paul to the Imperial City, giving him two bishops as companions and sending with him a letter to Constantius in which, among other things, he wrote the following: "Athanasius is still with me, but I am sending Paul to thee, that thy puissance may command him to resume his see; I ask the same for Athanasius, for I have learned that they were both driven out for their piety and were slandered..." To this Constans added something harsher, namely that, in case his brother should not agree, he, Constans himself, would personally advance upon him with military might and, even against the will of Constantius, restore Athanasius and Paul to their Churches.

When he arrived in the presence of the Emperor Constantius, the holy Paul handed him the letter of Constans. Frightened by his brother's threat, Constantius drove Macedonius

out and elevated Paul to the patriarchal throne; in the same manner he summoned Athanasius to him by letter and sent him to his patriarchate in Alexandria. Great was the joy of the Orthodox over their pastors, and for quite a long time they lived in peace, comforted by the doctrine of the great and divinely-inspired teachers. Both Athanasius in Alexandria and Paul in the Imperial City were beacons of piety for the whole world, dispelling far and wide the darkness of Arianism. But, lo! Magnētius, the field marshal of Constans, and those of like mind with him, slew the Emperor while he was out hunting. No sooner had the defender of Orthodoxy, the pious Emperor Constans of Rome, perished, than the Arians immediately gained ascendance and launched a persecution of the Orthodox. They first of all rose up against the universal champions of Orthodoxy. Athanasius left his cathedra himself, escaping the Arians who sought his death, and the blessed Paul was exiled and imprisoned in Cucusus of Armenia, and was there incarcerated in a small hut. There, one day, while he was serving the divine liturgy, the Arians fell upon him and strangled him with his own omophorion.

Thus, Macedonius was again made patriarch of Constantinople and was the cause of much more evil for the Church of Christ, persecuting and extirpating the Orthodox. Enjoying the staunch support of the exarch Philip, he drove out many Orthodox bishops and replaced them with Arians; and, subjecting them to divers tortures, he destroyed a multitude of people who refused to enter into ecclesiastical communion with him; in this, he took no pity even upon women. At his command, some had their breasts cut off; others' mouths were pried open with metal bars while the Arians' eucharist was poured in; some had noses and ears cut off, and others were branded with hot irons. In a word, the blood of the Orthodox was shed mercilessly. At this time, the Arians put to the sword two clergymen, Marcianus and Martyrius, who were notaries of the blessed Paul and champions of Orthodoxy (they are commemorated by the Church on October 25). The tyranny of Macedonius extended even into Paphlagonia. Learning that there were a multitude of Orthodox believers in that province, he sent thither three armed detachments of soldiers to force the Orthodox at sword point to enter into union with the Arians. The inhabitants of the city of Mantina, hearing that the force was drawing nigh, took up what arms they could — one, an axe; another, a scythe; another, a sharpened pole — and they assembled and went out against the armed forces. There took place an internecine skirmish in which a multitude of men on both sides fell. For this blood-bath no one was to blame but Macedonius.

Finally, Macedonius, without any order from the Emperor, dared to disinter and transfer to another place the relics of the holy Constantine the Great. Then the whole Church, one may say, flowed with blood as a result of internal strife which was caused by Macedonius' action. The Emperor was greatly displeased with both Macedonius and the Eparch

Philip, and both of them, on Constantius' orders, were deposed — the former from the patriarchal throne, and the latter from his position as eparch. Despite this, the heresies of Arius and Macedonius continued to exist and rent the Church apart for forty more years, until the reign of the holy Emperor Theodosius the Great, who finally convoked a council in Constantinople which condemned these heresies once and for all. Thereafter, the pious Emperor, in the year 381, transferred the relics of the holy confessor Paul from Cucusus to Constantinople with full honors, rendering glory unto the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In 1236, the relics of St. Paul were transferred to Venice from Constantinople by Latin crusaders who, having captured and despoiled Constantinople earlier in the century, continued to strip the churches of their sacred relics and appointments throughout their impious reign, until they were driven out in 1261 by the Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologos. The sacred relics have remained in Venice until our day.

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THE OPTIMA PRAYER OF ST. JOHN OF KRONSTADT

O LORD, grant unto me that with Thy peace I may greet all that this day is to bring. Grant unto me peace to surrender myself completely to Thy holy will. In every hour of this day instruct and guide me in all things. Whatever tidings I may receive during this day, do Thou teach me to accept tranquilly in the firm belief that Thy holy will governs all. Govern Thou my thoughts and feelings in all I do and say. When unforeseen things occur, let me not forget that all is sent by Thee. Teach me to behave sincerely and reasonably toward everyone, that I may bring confusion and sorrow to no one. Bestow on me, O Lord, strength to endure the fatigue of the day and to bear my part in its events. Guide Thou my will and teach me to pray, to believe, to hope, to suffer, to forgive, and to love.

WHY DOES THE ORTHODOX CHURCH BAPTIZE INFANTS?

On the face of it, this question would seem to be so obvious as to require no other response than 'obviously!' Neither is it necessary here to engage in the kind of theological speculation and argumentation which has led to so many books and 'scholarly' papers on the subject over the past few centuries. Nevertheless, living in a world in which a vast number of people who call themselves Christians argue vigorously against this ancient practice, it is well that we examine the question, and so be prepared to make an intelligent answer when challenged.



We should note briefly at the outset that the Lord clearly tells us that Holy Baptism is necessary for salvation; that He specifically commands that the little children should be brought to Him (albeit in another context, but not irrelevantly), and that in the instances in which baptisms are reported in the Scriptures no mention is made of any limitation on who was to be baptized...and in the social context of the ancient world, it would have been quite extraordinary for the head of a household to become a member of a 'new religion' without the other members thereof (including wives and slaves, who were a good deal less free than infants!) doing likewise. It is quite some time in the history of the Church before there is any discussion of the matter, for there was never in the early Church any challenge to the practice.

Why, then, we may ask, did it ever become a matter of controversy? The answer is really quite simple. So long as questions of Faith arose in the context of a fundamentally sacramental orientation to life, there was no reason to question the reception of the Mystery of Holy Baptism by infants (or slaves or the 'mentally incompetent'). But the moment

there is a fundamental shift in perception to a non-sacramental (or anti-sacramental) perspective, the question arises...and the answer is a foregone conclusion.

Our Lord, the holy Fathers of the Church, and the true Church to this day have taught that when we enter the baptismal waters, something *real* occurs in the recipient; a spiritual birth takes place which has a substantial effect upon his being, and which is every bit as real as was his physical birth. It is not necessary to be conscious, intelligent or acting 'freely' in order to be born physically, and neither is it necessary to be an 'intelligent consenting adult' in order to be born spiritually. [This truth does not, however, serve as a rationale for coercive practices to bring about the baptism of those capable of voluntary assent!] If, however, a fundamental philosophical position (alien to the Christian Faith) is adopted which says that there *are* no physical acts which have spiritual effects ...that these come about only as a result of rational and voluntary decisions (as is the conscious or unconscious position of those who would deny baptism to infants), then it becomes obvious that Baptism can have no meaning except in the case of those who 'choose' it. Such a position is, of course, alien to the entire tradition of the Church...and denies that the Holy Spirit can act unless as rational adults we consent to His action. It is, however, entirely in harmony with the 'spirit of the age' of rationalism...which underlies both rationalist humanism and most protestant thinking.

The consequences of such thinking are catastrophic, and by no means limited to the specific instance of Holy Baptism: they extend into every corner of the spiritual life, and inevitably lead, in the end, to overt atheism or, what is equally devastating, to a dessicated and sterile facsimile of the Christian Faith. Even Orthodox Christians, however, sometimes allow the consequences of such thought to influence their actions, postponing the baptism of their children for reasons unrelated to the Faith as if it were a matter of little consequence. While we do not accept the Roman Catholic teaching concerning the fate of unbaptized infants (which led at its extreme to the baptism *in utero* of endangered infants), we nevertheless must be concerned lest some mishap befall our children before they can be brought to spiritual birth in the Mystery of Baptism — and so cannot legitimately delay their baptism beyond a reasonable time after their births.

Holy Baptism is the beginning of life in the Kingdom of God, and the earlier in our lives we begin that life, the less 'baggage' of an unredeemed life we may have to carry with us through the rest of our lives. We may observe in practice that there is for the most part a significant difference in the manner in which infants and small children receive Holy Baptism, corresponding to their ages. The very youngest infants almost always come from the Font calm and peaceful, as if (and indeed, who dare say that they do not!) understood perfectly well what a great gift has been given to them. But infants who are

baptized after a lengthy delay (and after months or years of exposure without being guarded by the grace of the Holy Mysteries from the 'powers of the air' of the world about them), on the other hand, are not infrequently seen to be somewhat (or even greatly) disturbed by the event of Holy Baptism.

In sum, we bring infants to Holy Baptism for essentially the same reasons for which we bring them to birth in the physical world: that they may begin their life and growth as children of God, to become faithful citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven. We bring them that, from their very earliest years, they may be surrounded by the grace of God, and that they may be protected from the hostile demonic powers which confront them in a world which is yet subject to the powers and principalities. And finally, we bring them that they may be not only our children after the flesh, but also our children and brethren according to the Spirit...and to this end there is no other means than Holy Baptism.

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WHY DOES THE ORTHODOX CHURCH....

GIVE HOLY COMMUNION TO INFANTS AND CHILDREN?

The answer to this question is obviously closely related to the preceding one; yet, there are some special considerations which need to be addressed. Once again, it is necessary to note that this is not a question which would even normally have been asked until the time when men began to turn away from a sacramental (and Apostolic) understanding of the world in which they lived, and toward a rationalist and humanist understanding. If infants cannot legitimately receive the Holy Mysteries, then neither can the mentally incompetent, the senile, nor in general anyone incapable of fully rational and voluntary assent.

But this is not the case. Rather, the Heavenly Food is for all those who have properly prepared themselves as best they are able (obviously inapplicable in any sense which we can readily understand in the case of infants). But not only must it be available to all the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven...it is generally necessary for our spiritual welfare. (Note the cases in the Lives of the Saints in which many of those who adopted in faith ways of life which put them out of reach of the normal sacramental ministrations of the Church instead received the Holy Mysteries at the hands of angels.) Perhaps this is especially so for infants, who are every bit as subject to the demonic powers of this world as are adults, but whose only effective protection *must* come by the direct action of Divine Grace, which is above all other ways received in the Holy Mysteries. (Actually, we almost certainly for the most part delude ourselves if we suppose that adults have any other sufficient protection and sustenance from their own private intelligence and prayer....these are meant to be used together with the spiritual food of the Holy Mysteries.)



It is, therefore, not only possible but imperative that infants be brought to the reception of Holy Communion so often as possible. To do otherwise is, in effect, to bring a child to spiritual birth...and then proceed to starve him to death. We think it strange and horrifying when a natural parent permits such a situation with respect to the physical nourishment of a child; but all about us are children who have been brought to birth in the Kingdom of Heaven and whose parents (both natural and spiritual) permit them to be deprived of the spiritual food which is necessary to their growth. Rarely is anything said, other than once in a while by a conscientious priest.

Once again, pastoral observations indicate a noticeable difference between the behavior even in very small children of those who have consistently and frequently received the Divine Food, and those who have only rarely been given that which they so badly need. Those who have from their earliest days partaken of the Holy Mysteries come to the Chalice with open and beautiful childish joy. But not infrequently, a child is brought to the Altar as an exceptional event....and reacts with fright or rejection. While this phenomenon might be explained away as familiarity or lack thereof, it is not improbable that a significant component is that those who have been deprived by faithless and/or thoughtless parents and godparents of their necessary nourishment at least sometimes fall prey to the demonic forces which constantly surround them in this world, and which labor through inciting in them fear and rebellion to keep them away from Divine Grace.

Let us, therefore, resolve to do all in our power to see to it that the infants who have been brought to Christ in Holy Baptism do not at once fall into spiritual starvation, but rather that they receive true spiritual nourishment in the most effective form possible through continual reception of the Holy Mysteries. And let us not, at the same time, forget that *all* of us are called to come to the Lord even as 'little children'....and that no matter what may be the resources of our prayer lives and intellects, we nevertheless are as infants in the Kingdom of Heaven, and that we too are in desperate need of the fulness of spiritual nourishment.

St. Justin the Martyr (†AD 165): Eve, a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent, and bore disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and the power of the Most High would overshadow her, for which reason the Holy One born of her is the Son of God.

THE HOUSE OF GOD



The Church, through the ordering of the church building and her divine service, acts upon the whole man, educates him wholly: acts upon his sight, hearing, smelling, feeling, taste, imagining, mind and will, by the splendor of the images, and of the building in general, by the fragrance of the incense, by the veneration of the Gospels, Cross and images, by the singing, and by the reading of the Scriptures.

The source of every true joy, of all true calm and peace of conscience, of cleansing, of spiritual and bodily healing, the source of spiritual power and boldness, flows in the

church — theatres and other worldly distractions and consolations can never replace that which a true Christian receives in the church, where God Himself comforts the souls of those who believe, and whose hearts are turned to Him, as a mother comforts her child. It is from the Church, also, that our departed ones receive consolation and solace, cleansing from their sins, and forgiveness.

Truly the Church is heaven and earth; for where the throne of God is, where the awful sacraments are celebrated, where the angels serve together with men, ceaselessly glorifying the Almighty, there is truly heaven. And so let us enter into the house of God, with the fear of God, with a pure heart, laying aside all vices and even worldly care, and let us stand in it with faith and reverence, with understanding attention, with love and peace in our hearts, so that we may come away renewed, as though made heavenly; so that we may live in the holiness natural to heaven, not binding ourselves by worldly desires and pleasures.

In the Church is accomplished the mystery of cleansing from sins. Reverence, therefore, the place where your soul is cleansed from all impurity, where you are reconciled to God, and are endowed with the true life of the Spirit.

How ardently we should love the house of God, how we should adorn it! So do, indeed, all who recognize its value; and the Church prays for them, saying *Let us pray for them that, with faith, reverence, and fear of God, enter herein; and further, Let us pray for them who bring forth the fruit of good works in this holy and venerable temple; and again, Hallow them that love the beauty of thine house; do thou by Thy divine power exalt them unto glory.*

The adornment of holy things elevates our souls to God, and is therefore not merely not wrong, but positively holy and edifying, as also are sacred music, the fragrance of incense, the magnificence and splendor of the ornaments of the church building and its vessels. All these, destined to glorify God and to arouse devout feelings, are not sinful, but holy.

--- St. John of Kronstadt

St. John of Kronstadt (†AD 1908): Everything within us is earthly, corrupt, impure and evil, whilst Thy saints are the purest fragrance, and especially Thy most pure Mother, Thy living, light-bearing abode; she is purer than all the brightness of the sun, more fragrant than all perfumes, for heaven and earth are full of the fragrance of her holiness and of her divine virtues.

A STRANGE WORLD

Local news in Tennessee has been dominated for several weeks by the sad story of the conflict between a fundamentalist family in the eastern part of the state and the medical establishment, which enlisted the support of the state Human Services Department and the courts. A twelve-year-old girl, taken to the doctor for treatment of a minor problem, was discovered to have a cancerous bone tumor, of a rare type which was identified as being almost always rapidly fatal if left untreated, and for which treatment (by chemotherapy) is only rarely successful. It is the religious conviction (whether right or wrong) of the family (shared by the girl, according to published reports) that medical treatment is appropriate only for broken bones and flesh wounds, and that all more fundamental problems are to be entrusted to faith in divine healing. Needless to say, the doctors disagreed...and invoked the power of the state to enforce their own convictions. The case went to court, and in violation of the express wishes of the family and the child herself, the girl was removed from the custody of her parents and given over to the Human Services Department, to be forcibly committed to the hospital for chemotherapy.

Appeals to the higher courts of the state were unsuccessful, and the initial course of treatment is now complete (prognosis still uncertain). [According to this morning's news, the medical personnel involved are now refusing to permit the family and their attorneys access to the medical records concerning the case, which are needed for a determination as to whether an appeal to federal courts is in order.] But the real issue here has nothing to do with whether the treatment is ultimately successful or not. Nor does it rest upon whether we agree or disagree with the convictions of the family....unless we adopt the position, as it might appear the state has, that anything whatever which the medical establishment thinks may have some remote chance of preserving a human life at whatever cost *must* be undertaken, regardless of the will of the individual. (More accurately, in this case the issue is one both of the competence of parents to make such decisions for their children, and of that of children of the age of twelve to have religious convictions sufficient to make such decisions for themselves — over against the competence of the medical and social service establishments to make those same decisions....needless to say, not on a religious basis.

This case would perhaps not be quite so strange, did it not arise in a world in which millions of unborn children are murdered routinely....with the active support and encouragement of those very agencies which have intervened in this and many similar cases. Consequently, it is obviously *not* the position of the medical and social service establishments that human life must be preserved at all costs. The rationale (if indeed there is one) for these two extremes of action must be sought elsewhere. Any attempt to do so can, of course, be only speculative.

Regardless of what may be the explanation for this contradiction, it is obvious that a crucial shift in the balance of power between the individual (and his religious position) and the state has occurred. The state has substituted its judgement as to who should live and who should die, and under what circumstances and for what reasons, for those of the individual. This is not, of course, a surprising development in a religiously pluralistic society, where there is no longer (if there ever was) any common ground in Faith for such decisions and understandings. But it is a truly frightening development for those who remain significantly grounded in the Faith (any kind of faith, for that matter), for the state has in effect declared that it and it alone is the final arbiter of who should live and who should die — not God, nor the Church, not even the individual concerned. If the state determines that a particular individual or class of individuals should die or be allowed or encouraged to die — or forced to live, or 'live' — then the economic and police powers of the state are invoked to bring this about. That states should use their power to bring about the extermination of individuals under their power is by no means unprecedented (except that never before in history has a state lent its power and resources and consent to the mass murder of unborn children). But the corollary is unprecedented: if the state decides that an individual or class of individuals should be subject to whatever series of treatments (in many cases, in reality torments) the medical establishment devises, in the interests of a greater or lesser probability of preserving life or the semblance of life, then likewise its economic and police powers are invoked to that end. [A few years ago in Nashville an elderly woman, dying in her own home, was forcibly removed to the hospital by medical and police personnel, so that she might die in the manner *they* thought appropriate.]

While the actions of the state in support of infant-murder are by far the more horrifying, in actuality the fundamental issue and principle are the same, and we should be no less alarmed by cases such as this present one. As Orthodox Christians, we believe that ultimately the power of life and death belongs to the Lord God, and that our actions must be responsibly directed by prayerful consideration of His will.

For the most part, we have but little power to do anything effective about these misdeeds of our society, although we must, if we are to be responsible in our faith, raise our voices in protest whenever we have an effective opportunity to do so. But we must go farther than this. Tragically, we cannot any longer take our bodily problems to the medical system for assistance with any confidence that the ultimate decisions as to how to proceed will be made in faith and prayer. Rather, we must always be aware that the moment we make contact with that system, we run the risk that its judgement may be forcibly substituted for our own and that of our spiritual fathers (to say nothing of the vast number of cases in which we are subjected to forms of medical treatment to which we might or might not

assent were we aware of what was being done without our knowledge or understanding or consent). Were there throughout the land a network of trained medical personnel (in more serious cases perforce including hospital facilities as well as private physicians) Orthodox in faith, whose commitment to the Faith came before their commitment to the medical establishment, it would be possible, by carefully selecting our physicians first on the basis of their faith and only thereafter on the basis of other considerations, to effectively bypass some of these problems. But this is not the case. [Nevertheless, it would doubtless be useful if there existed some central referral system whereby Orthodox faithful could be put in touch with Orthodox physicians at least in serious cases which might warrant the inherent difficulties of seeking advice and treatment under such conditions.] In the absence of such a network, we are left in a position where the initial responsibility is solely our own. The only effective way in which we can exercise this responsibility is by making as our *first* consideration when we decide to seek medical assistance the selection of a physician who is willing to declare himself, as specifically as possible, as willing to defer final judgement concerning the course of treatment to be taken, no matter what the circumstances, to the individual in consultation with his spiritual elders... both for adults and for our children...regardless of the possible consequences of censure from his professional colleagues and even the state. Such a declaration is of no legal value whatever in the face of the coercive activities of the state, and therefore its significance must be evaluated solely on the basis of an assessment of the personal integrity and strength of character of the physician. Its significance is limited also by the extent to which the physician is willing and able, should hospitalization be necessary, to undertake to arrange this under circumstances whereby the final judgement still remains in our own hands — very difficult in most cases. We would do well, of course, to begin by selecting physicians and hospital facilities which openly declare their refusal to participate in any way, no matter what the excuse, in the murder of unborn children, and those which do not invest their time and resources in unreasonably complex methods of diagnosis and treatment. We might do well also to inquire into the manner of life of the physician in question and the disposition of resources in the case of hospital facilities: a physician whose manner of life declares that one of his principal reasons for his practice is to sustain a highly affluent style of life is probably not very trustworthy, and neither is a hospital facility which exists in large measure for the financial profit of its owners... or the unreasonably high compensation of its administrative personnel, even when it is 'not-for-profit'.

We would do well to make such inquiries *before* we find ourselves in the midst of a crisis situation (although it is quite impossible to cover all the possible situations: if we are hospitalized following a serious accident, we are unlikely to have any control whatever over the circumstances), for it is difficult to make either unclouded inquiry or reasonable

evaluation when we are in the midst of the emotional turmoil of a serious and threatening illness or injury. We would also do well to think through our own understanding and position concerning such matters (and to consult with our spiritual elders) before we find ourselves in the midst of a crisis, for the same reasons. It is clear that the universal Church does not endorse (much less require) the employment of any and all means in the attempted furtherance of human life (or the semblance thereof). Neither does She take the position that no steps other than reliance upon the Lord in prayer should be employed in the response to illness or injury (although some of the saints seem indeed to have themselves adopted such a position). Consequently, an appropriate position in accordance with our faith lies somewhere in the vast middle...and it is up to us in faith and prayer to determine where. May the Lord guide and direct us!

Unworthy priest Gregory



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CONCERNING PROSTRATIONS

For the attaining of internal unity in public prayer, obedience to external discipline and concentration on the content of the Divine Service is required.

We must be aware that the Church Typikon directs us, at definite times in the Divine Service, to make prostrations, rising immediately to one's feet. There is no kneeling in the Orthodox Church except on very rare occasions. The faithful are informed of these rare cases by a special exclamation: "On bended knee...let us pray to the Lord."

By the rules of the holy fathers and the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, prostrations are forbidden on Sundays (beginning with Vespers on Saturday) and on days of the Lord's feasts....

"On the Lord's day and on the days of Pentecost (from Pascha to Trinity Sunday), let everything be observed identically in all Eparchies, as it is pleasing to the holy council, and, standing, bring prayers to God." (Canon XX, 1st Ecumenical Council)

"It has been canonically passed down to us by our God-bearing fathers, that we do not bend the knee on Sundays, for the sake of the honor of Christ's Resurrection" (Canon XC, 6th Ecumenical Council), i.e., it is forbidden to kneel or make prostrations on Sundays.

"This day (Sunday) is something like the image of the future age.... Therefore, the Church Typicon teaches us to maintain, on this day, an upright position of the body during prayer..., as if transferring our thoughts from the present to the future (where there will be no kneeling). But, someone will say, I have a sincere desire to make a prostration. Your desire, born out of season and untimely, is stillborn. There are weekdays for prostrations. But on feastdays, they are not only not required from us, but the rules of the Holy Church even forbid (them)." (St. Basil the Great)

The significance of prostrations in instilling a religious sensitivity is beautifully revealed in an ancient paternal narrative:

"Once a peasant came to Abba John and, having told him of his extreme need, asked if he could borrow four rubles. The starets pitied him from the monastery stores. Two years passed, but the peasant no longer visited the Starets. Meanwhile, the blessed Abba found out that the peasant had begun to lead a careless life and had lost all concern for his family.

“The starets thought for a long time how to help this peasant. Finally, having called the peasant to himself, he said to him: ‘My brother, pay me your debt.’

‘God sees that I have nothing with which to pay you,’ replied the peasant.

‘Well, then, I shall help you to pay it off,’ said the Starets. ‘When you are free, come to me and make thirty prostrations before the icon; I will give you 18 kopecks each time you do this.’

“The peasant began to come to the monastery very often and together with the Starets used to make the prostrations.

‘Why are you doing this?’ the brethren asked the Starets. ‘Are the prostrations alone to the benefit of the peasant? It would be better for you to instruct him.’

“To this the Starets answered, ‘Spiritual life has been extinguished in this peasant, and it cannot reappear in him at once. The fruit of the plant never ripens in an instant. For every fruit there precedes a blossom.... Do you not know that the gift of true prayer and spiritual life is as a fruit? It is necessary to toil much until this fruit ripens. Prostrations are like the first entrenchment of trees. Amongst the prostrations there will unavoidably be manifested the beginnings of a prayerful spirit.’

And the Starets proved to be correct. He continued to exercise the peasant in prostrations until such time as the latter had, in this way, paid off all of his debt. But even after this, the peasant was often seen with the Starets. He came voluntarily to pray with him and to make prostrations. The peasant was no longer in need of money, because from that time he began a sober and hard-working life.” (*The Spiritual Meadow*)

It happened that the prostrations — those simple mechanical movements — had uncovered in the peasant a dormant penitent conscience for his sinful life. Now it will become comprehensible for us why prostrations are timely and beneficial at week-day Divine Services and on the days of Great Lent when contrition for one’s sins is demanded of the faithful, and why they are not timely and not beneficial on Sundays and on the Lord’s Feasts and on the fifty days after Pascha when there is called forth from the faithful a joyous experience of the victory of Christ over hell and death and of the future expectations of the Church.

It is necessary not only to observe every ritual, but to enter into it deeply and practically, so that its internal strength renews the heart. For every ritual in its own time has been created with great thought, great inspiration of faith and with prayer....

This is why it is very important to teach our children at an early age not only the Law of God and prayers, but also to involve them practically in Church requirements. Let the rituals be not understandable for them at first, let them be fulfilled mechanically; [even so] they will gradually reveal to the child, as he matures, their great spiritual strength.

All of our Church rituals are those steps along which millions of the faithful have ascended to God. We must not disdain but rather embrace this path, these footsteps of the millions of the holy.

(Excerpted from ORTHODOX LIFE, XXII 3, as reprinted in Orthodox Christian Witness.)

BACK ISSUE BONANZA

Now is the time, if you have been waiting, to fill out your collection of back issues!

Effective with the next issue, prices for back issues will be raised, to \$1.50 for single copies and \$8 for volume sets. At present all issues are still available...but some are now in short supply. (All issues will be kept permanently available, using the copying machine when needed.)

So...in order to relieve the pressure on storage space and raise much-needed capital, we make this special offer:

For \$25, you will receive, postpaid, all available (in their original printings) back issues of LIVING ORTHODOXY through Vol. IV (Vol. V issues up to present also included as needed on request). In any case, you will receive a minimum of 24 issues (some duplicates may be included after stocks of some issues are exhausted). This offer is valid only until the end of November, so act now!

With the blessing of
HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN PHILARET
The mission parish of
SAINT MARY OF EGYPT
has been established in
Birmingham, Alabama

Interested persons, and travellers seeking Divine Services, should contact:
Thomas Brecht, temporary warden: 205/870-7446;
Tarasios Sullivan, reader: 205/251-6694; or
Fr. Gregory, serving priest: 615/536-5239

Metropolitan Philaret's blessing was conveyed to the newly-formed parish during a pastoral visitation by His Eminence's emissary, Archpriest Vladimir Shishkoff, accompanied by Fr. Gregory, on the weekend following the Feast of the Holy Protection. Vigil and Divine Liturgy were served in Birmingham at that time. A permanent location for services is still being sought; in the interim, Readers' Services are being conducted regularly at various locations, with full Divine Services at frequent intervals.

HAIL, PROTECTION OF ALL CHRISTIANS!

Upon the same occasion, Fr. Vladimir brought with him, for the veneration of the faithful in Birmingham, and for deposition at the Temple of the Annunciation at Agape Community, a portion of the Sash of the Mother of God, delivered into our safekeeping by the graciousness of Holy Transfiguration Monastery.

The relic was greeted with joy in Birmingham, and welcomed to the Temple of the Annunciation with the celebration of the Akathist Hymn to the Protection of the Mother of God. Thanks be to God!

The Holy Sash of the Mother of God was given originally to the Apostle Thomas during her miraculous appearance to him after her repose...a consolation for his inability to venerate her holy Relics, as it was the Lord's will that he not arrive in time for her burial, but rather later as a witness to her resurrection. A major portion of the Sash yet reposes on the Holy Mountain, and it is from that source that the particle which now protects the Temple of the Annunciation comes.

SAINT MICHAEL THE BULGARIAN

(Whose Memory is Celebrated on 22 November)

The holy soldier Michael lived in Bulgaria in the 800's. He was born in the city of Potuka and his family was among the first of the Bulgarians to enter into Christ's Holy Church. St. Michael began his great moral struggles at an early age and continued them throughout his life. By his example of love and patience, many others were saved from the evil one.

When he reached the age for military service, St. Michael entered the army of the King of Bulgaria, and served with great courage and valor. By the time he was twenty-five, the Saint was already a hero and he was elevated to command a troop.

On one occasion, as his troop was returning from battle, the warriors stopped to rest by a lake. One of St. Michael's aides noticed a column of smoke rising up near the shore a short distance from the camp. He went to see what the source of the smoke was, and found a young woman, sitting and weeping by the fire. The soldier was moved to pity by the woman's sorrowful tears. "What is your trouble?" he asked. "How can I help you?"

"Save yourself!" cried the woman. "Flee from here before the beast comes!" The aide was stunned and rushed to report the matter to St. Michael.

The Saint hurried to see the woman and to investigate. He found out that the people of that district were pagans and that they offered young women or children as sacrifices to the demon they called the lake god. The person to be sacrificed was placed in a certain spot on the lake shore where a beast came regularly. The beast would devour the unfortunate person.

St. Michael was moved to compassion and resolved that, with God's help, he would destroy this terrible demon worship and human sacrifice. Selecting one of his soldiers to accompany him, he stood in prayer for a long time, and then sat down to await the appearance of the beast. The young woman began to plead with him to leave the place and save himself. The Saint was moved by her concern for the safety of others, and he sent his companion away some distance, while he himself fell on his face in fervent prayer to God.

While he was still in prayer, the roar of the beast suddenly echoed along the lake shore. The holy warrior rose to his feet, crossed himself, and drew his sword. The great animal appeared before them and St. Michael, with prayer on his lips, raised his shield, drew his sword back, and rushed at the beast. With a sharp thrust, he gave it a mortal wound.

Nevertheless, the beast managed to strike the Saint such a blow that Michael lay unconscious for a long time.

When the Saint had recovered, he sat by the fire resting, and word of his victory spread quickly through the countryside. People began to arrive to see this brave soldier. When a crowd had gathered, St. Michael rose up and preached the Gospel of Christ and His Holy Church to these enslaved people. He taught them to turn away from demon worship and human sacrifice and enter into the Church of Christ. Many of them listened to him and were baptised.

Soon after he arrived home, the young Saint was called to the Lord. He reposed in peace in the year 866. The Lord worked many miracles and healings at the Saint's grave. In 1206, Tsar John of Bulgaria carried the sacred relics of St. Michael the Soldier to Trnovo, and placed them in the Church of the Ascension of the Lord.

Through his holy prayers, may we too find strength to conquer evil. Amen!

(Reprinted from Enquiry, an Orthodox periodical in Australia.)



New from the Press

Not exactly new, as it has been available a long time. But existing stocks have been exhausted, and it has been newly typeset for better legibility. *PRAYER*, originally a publication of Orthodox Information, has been reprinted by permission. An excellent collection of short citations from the Fathers concerning prayer, succinctly detailing the central aspects of our prayer life, and well arranged for ease of comprehension. Printed on a single sheet, it is ideal for widespread distribution. Single copy 25¢ + postage (50¢ for a single copy by 1st class mail). 100 copies shipped flat postpaid, \$15.

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FROM THE FATHERS

Abba John the Dwarf (VI century): The Enemy doth not rejoice in anything so much as in those who do not reveal and lay bare their thoughts to their fathers.

From the Sayings of the Desert Fathers: An elder used to say: "Satan is a twister of cords, and as long as thou givest him threads he will plait them"; now he spake this concerning the thoughts.

St. Photios the Great (c. 810-891 A.D.): If these Fathers had spoken in opposition, when the debated question was brought before them, and had fought it contentiously and had maintained their opinion and had persevered in this false teaching, and when convicted of it had held to their doctrine unto death, then they would necessarily be rejected together with the error of their minds. But if they spoke badly or, for some reason not known to us, deviated from the right path, but no question was put to them nor did anyone challenge them to learn the truth, we admit them to the list of Fathers as if they had not said it -- because of their righteousness of life and distinguished virtue and their faith, faultless in other respects. We do not, however, follow their teaching in which they stray from the path of truth. (...) We, who know that some of our Holy Fathers and teachers strayed from the faith of true dogmas, do not take as doctrine those areas in which they strayed, but we embrace the men. So also in the case of any who are charged with teaching that the Spirit proceeds from the Son, we do not admit what is opposed to the word of the Lord, but we do not cast them from the rank of the Fathers.

St. Isaac the Syrian (VI Cent.): Walk before God in simplicity, and not in subtleties of the mind. Simplicity brings faith; but subtle and intricate speculations bring conceit; and conceit brings withdrawal from God.

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk (†AD 1783): On this day, the living temple of God, the Mother of the unageing Life, departed from things earthly to things heavenly. On this day, the Queen appeared at the right hand of the King of Heaven, arrayed in vesture of inwoven gold (Ps 44:8).

St. Seraphim of Sarov (†AD 1833): Everything within us is earthly, corrupt, impure and evil, whilst Thy saints are the purest fragrance, and especially Thy most pure Mother, Thy living, light-bearing abode; she is purer than all the brightness of the sun, more fragrant than all perfumes, for heaven and earth are full of the fragrance of her holiness and of her divine virtues.